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SUBJECT: SOUTH DARFUR HAC READMITS IOM

¶1. (U) Summary: On September 15, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) signed "Terms of Engagement" with the South Darfur Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC). The document clarifies the relationship between IOM and the South Darfur HAC, permitting IOM to commence population tracking and returns verification activities. End Summary.

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IOM SIGNS TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT WITH SOUTH DARFUR HAC  
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¶2. (U) On September 15, IOM and the South Darfur HAC signed "Terms of Engagement." This document closely replicates the Memorandum of Understanding with IOM, the Government of National Unity, and the United Nations (UN), signed on August 21, 2004. The new agreement will permit IOM to recommence operations in South Darfur that have been stalled since February.

¶3. (SBU) IOM expressed concern at the government's high expectations for IOM's support for returns, which the organization must carefully manage. In discussions with the South Darfur HAC, IOM emphasized that the organization's primary role is population tracking and assessing the voluntary and appropriate nature of returns. IOM is already working to monitor and map returns in seven rural councils in North Darfur. IOM plans to reinstate the Returns Working Group, and has invited the South Darfur HAC to participate. To complement IOM's work with protection monitoring, UN agencies continue to advocate for the South Darfur HAC to allow the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to resume operations in the state.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: In a recent note to UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) regarding 2010 strategy planning for Darfur, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) for Darfur noted that "Darfur today is not the Darfur of 2003 and 2004." IDP needs have evolved with time; many IDPs are integrating into urban and peripheral urban areas, while some are returning home for seasonal activities or permanent resettlement. In fact, the HC projects that larger numbers of IDPs may return home in 2010 than during previous years, and consequently, NGOs and UN agencies must be more vigilant regarding returns planning and response.

¶5. (SBU) Comment continued: IOM advises that humanitarian agencies consider returns in the overall context of community needs in areas of return, rather than thinking of returnees as a stand-alone beneficiary group meriting targeted assistance. There is fear that labeling individuals as "returnees" with special benefits could stimulate artificial population displacements in search of distributions. Moreover, an appearance of bias toward returnees could aggravate inter-community conflicts that lie at the root of the Darfur crisis. Finally, upholding the principles of voluntary

and appropriate return remains the foundation of international support for sustainable returns. The news that IOM will be a present and active partner in South Darfur is very good news. End Comment.

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